

Springfield Newspapers

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Illinois Springfield

Newspapers

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD.

Readers of The State Journal will be interested to know that this paper, which is the oldest newspaper of continuous publication in the state, is seventy-five years old today, and enters the seventy-sixth year of its existence in better condition to render satisfactory service to its readers than at any previous birthday anniversary.

Josiah and Simeon Francis were the founders of the paper. They brought out its first issue, November 10, 1831. The present management has had control of the property nearly eighteen years, and has made many improvements during that time. As the paper is sharing in the general prosperity of the times, and the owners have ambitions for making it still more valuable to its readers, the policies which have enlarged its purposes and strengthened its influence may be depended upon to put it still more prominently to the front.



ILLINOIS



"THY WONDROUS STORY"

By JOHN HOWARD TODD, A. B. (Member Illinois State Historical Society)

THE BIRTH OF THE SANGAMON JOURNAL

MUCH curious interest was aroused in Springfield in 1831 when two yankee editors appeared there and announced their intention to start printing a newspaper. They set up a little old press they had brought with them, and on Nov. 10, 1831, the first issue of the Sangamon Journal, now the Illinois State Journal, appeared. The event is entitled to a place in a calendar of Illinois days because the paper born at that time has had a longer continuous existence than any other in the state today. Simeon and Joshua Francis, brothers from Connecticut, were the original publishers.

It soon became apparent that the yankee editors were men of consequence and that their influence would be felt far beyond the confines of Sangamon County. They were partial to the Whig party, as might have been suspected from their early environment, and they wielded their pens vigorously in advocacy of a national bank and a protective tariff. On state issues they contended valiantly for internal improvements and thereby made friends for the paper.

After the tenth issue the name of the paper was changed to the Sangamon Journal, and so continued until Sept. 23, 1847, when it became the Illinois Journal. On Aug. 13, 1855, another change was made to the Illinois State Journal, the name by which the publication still is known. The paper appeared first as a daily on Monday, June 13, 1848. Its original proprietors sold it in 1855 to W. H. Bailhache and Edward L. Baker, and when the Republican party was born in 1856 its proprietors espoused the principles of that political organization.

Simeon Francis, Mr. Baker and Paul Selby were the most distinguished editors of the Journal in its earlier days. Mr. Francis fostered the youthful ambitions of Abraham Lincoln by loaning the gaunt young man from New Salem a copy of Blackstone and all the other books within his reach. He is said to have been the man who introduced Mr. Lincoln to the leading professional and social figures of Springfield. Mr. Lincoln reciprocated in 1861 by appointing Mr. Francis paymaster of all the troops in the Northwest with headquarters in Washington Territory. Mr. Francis made the far Northwest his home after he left Illinois. He established the Portland Oregonian, still a power in the newspaper field.

After many years' connection with the Journal Mr. Baker was appointed consul to Buenos Aires by President Grant in 1873, and he remained in that country twenty-three years. He died July 8, 1897, as the result of a railway accident. On a monument to his memory in Springfield is a tablet contributed by citizens of Buenos Aires and foreign diplomatic representatives there, expressive of their esteem and affection.

Paul Selby, who was associate editor of the Journal during the civil war period and from 1874 to 1878 and one of the proprietors from the latter year to 1889, was a leading figure in the formation of the Republican party. He presided over the conference of anti-Nebraska editors held at Decatur on Washington's birthday, 1856, when a Republican state central committee was appointed and a call was issued for the first state convention in Bloomington on May 29 following. Few men were so well versed in the history of Illinois as Mr. Selby, who wrote contributions to it until his pen literally dropped from his hand when he was 87 years old.

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THE STATE Journal Register

The **State Journal-Register**, the morning daily newspaper for Springfield and central Illinois, is the product of two pioneer Illinois newspapers.

It is the oldest newspaper in Illinois. The **Journal** began publication in Springfield in 1831 as the **Sangamon Journal**. The **Register** was founded in 1836 in Vandalia, and moved to Springfield in 1839, two years after the capital was moved there.

In the early days, the **Journal** supported the political career of a young country lawyer running for the Illinois legislature. Later, after he became the sixteenth president of the United States, Abraham Lincoln wrote, "The **Journal** paper was always my friend. . ." The newspaper still carries that quotation in its masthead.

The **Journal** became a Copley newspaper in 1928, and the **Register** was acquired by Copley in 1942. The two, once fiercely competitive rivals, were merged in 1974 to become **The State Journal-Register** of today. The newspaper was acquired by GateHouse Media Inc. on April 11, 2007.

Since 1973, the newspaper has been engaged in an ongoing building and new equipment program that has made it one of the most modern newspaper plants in downstate Illinois. The plant is well into its third generation of computerized editing, typesetting and color separation systems.

While never losing its fascination with political news coverage, **The State Journal-Register** in recent years has become the dominant source of all news and feature coverage for readers in eleven central Illinois counties. From its modern offices and printing plant, the newspaper has distinguished itself with award-winning advertising, news coverage, photography and reproduction.

<http://web.archive.org/web/20070810001904/http://www.sj-r.com/about/sjr.asp>

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